

NETWORK COUNCIL:

ACERCA
Benito Juarez Clinic
Birmingham P&J Committee
Bruderhof
C.A. Task Force of Cincinnati
Carolina Task Force on C.A.
Casa Bonampak
Center for Economic Justice
Center for Global Education
Chiapas Coalition of Denver
Chiapas Committee of Cleveland
Chiapas Committee of Pittsburgh
Chiapas Media Project
Chiapas-95
Chiapas-Albany Solidarity
Chiapas Support Committee
CISCAP
Coalition for Indigenous Rights
Coalicción Apoyo Latinoamericano
Columbus Peace Center
Com por Solidaridad en Americas
Comité Emiliano Zapata
Community Action on L.A.
Coordinadora Internacional de
Apoyo al Pueblo de México
CREA
Cross Border Labor Organizing
DarkNight Field Notes
Denver P&J Committee
Disarm Education Fund
Doctors for Global Health
Equal Exchange
EPICA
Episcopal Peace Fellowship
Escuela Popular
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Food First
Gainesville Com. for Mexico
Global Exchange
Grassroots International
Guatemala Partners
Howard County Friends of L.A.
Interconnect
KITCA
LaCasa
L.A. Task Force-Diocese of KC
LACOCA
Lexington Solidarity Committee
Marin Interfaith Task Force
Maryknoll Office Global Concerns
Media Island International
Metropolitan Sanctuary Alliance
Michigan Peace Teams
NACLA
National Lawyers Guild
New York Zapatistas
N.A. Neighborhood Association
N.A. for Democracy in Mexico
NHCAN
Nicaragua Network
NCDM
Office of the Americas
Peace Action
Peace Action-Maine
Peninsula P&J Center
Pueblo por la Paz
Puentes de Cristo
Radical Philosophers Association
Rainforest Action Network
Resource Center for Nonviolence
Resource Center of the Americas
SOA Watch
SHARE Foundation
Strategic Pastoral Action Network
Task Force on Central America
Tonantzin
Xicano Development Center
Witness for Peace

Mexico Solidarity Network

Member of the Alliance for Global Justice

January 11, 2001

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative DeFazio,

On behalf of the Mexico Solidarity Network, I am writing to sincerely thank you for drafting, sponsoring and introducing **House Congressional Resolution 350** and to share some exciting news. On December 23, 2000, the Mexican government eliminated special visa requirements for foreign human rights observers in Mexico. Human rights observers can now travel to Mexico using simple tourist visas.

The elimination of visa requirements was one of the first acts of the new Fox administration, and comes on the heels of a long campaign organized by the Mexico Solidarity Network since the 1998 expulsion of Tom Hansen, current National Coordinator.

Your introduction of H.CON.RES.350 in May of 2000, condemning human rights abuses in Mexico and calling on the Mexican government to facilitate the presence of foreign human rights observers was a very important part of the campaign. After the introduction of the resolution, the Mexican government quickly began analyzing immigration policy and taking steps to facilitate human rights observers.

In June the MSN organized a series of meetings with representatives of the PRD, the PAN and Mexican civil society to pressure government officials around the expulsion issue. Also in June, Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute pressured President Zedillo directly when Tom Hansen's application for an election observer visa was denied. On June 28 of last year, while the long-ruling PRI was still in power, Hansen became the first "expulsado" to win return to Mexico. Shortly after, the Network won a commitment from government officials to review all outstanding expulsions. Since then, a number of "expulsados" have returned to Mexico and President Fox invited all "expulsados" to apply for new visas.

Since the 1994 Zapatista uprising, the Mexican government has been waging a low-intensity war against indigenous communities, particularly in the southern states of Chiapas and Guerrero. The role of international human rights observers has been critical in the effort to document abuses of power and violations of international human rights treaties to which Mexico is a signatory. In 1998, without the approval of the Mexican congress, PRI officials initiated new immigration protocols that severely restricted human rights observation in Mexico.

4834 N. Springfield
Chicago, IL 60625
773-583-7728

MSN@MexicoSolidarity.org
www.mexicosolidarity.org

RECEIVED

JAN 17 2001

**Peter DeFazio, M.C.
Washington, D.C.**

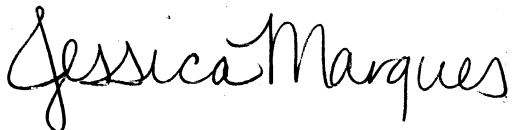
1247 E Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003
202-544-9355

Despite repeated appeals for human rights observation by Mexican civil society, the Mexican government expelled over 400 foreigners from Chiapas since 1995. Visa restrictions made effective human rights observation impossible, and it was never clear who needed the visas. Some foreigners wishing to travel in Mexico as human rights observers were told by local Mexican consulates that a tourist visa was sufficient, and that "human rights visas" did not exist.

The lifting of visa restrictions is a small but significant victory for civil society on both sides of the border as we struggle together in defense of human rights. We hope you will continue to monitor the situation in Mexico. Although there have been some advances toward peace, the situation remains tense.

Thank you again for supporting peace and human rights in Mexico.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Marques". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Jessica Marques
Legislative Coordinator